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ABSTRACT

This report defines the concept of identification, presents results of Scandinavian mass communications research studying children's identification with the content of mass media, reviews research in this area, and indicates directions for future research. Two types of identification study are reviewed: those which studied the type of child who identifies with models in the mass media and with whom they identify, and the importance of identification for the effects of mass communication. In this regard, studies of individual and social characteristics, similarity and wishful identification, and identification with animals and with other children are explored. It is suggested that the focus of past Scandinavian research on whether identification is important in the mass communication process should be reformulated to when it is important, and that studies need to view the process as a long-term process rather than in terms of individual experiences. (RAO)

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CHILDREN AND IDENTIFICATION IN THE MASS COMMUNICATION PROCESS.
A summary of Scandinavian research and a theoretical discussion.

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CHILDREN AND IDENTIFICATION IN THE MASS COMMUNICATION PROCESS

A summary of Scandinavian research and a theoretical discussion.

In the following report we shall first discuss the meaning of the concept "identification" (pages 1 - 6). We shall then present results of those Scandinavian mass communication studies that have treated children and identification (pages 7 - 22). This section is partly hypothetical. The third and final section is of a more theoretical nature. Here we discuss the focus of past research, formulate a definition of the identification concept that we feel is meaningful, and indicate some directions for future research on identification (pages 23 - 31).

THE CONCEPT OF IDENTIFICATION

Children's identification with the content of television, films, radio, books and other mass media is a controversial subject, both in public debate and among researchers. In public debate interest in identification has been stimulated by, for example, such phenomena as the spreading of fads and new fashions throughout the West. Many have traced such "vogues" to a certain film currently playing in the theatres. These comprehensive effects on fashions have even been attributed to individual actors or actresses in the films. Similarly, it has been claimed that identification with the hero in Westerns, spy-thrillers and the like leads to a tough, stereotyped ideal of masculinity, and to a greater inclination toward violence.

Research has stressed the vital role of identification in the socialization process. Child psychologists regard identification as a basic factor in the child's development. Generally speaking, the word itself is derived from two Latin words: idem = the same, and facere = to do. Freud introduced the term into psychology at the turn of the century. Turning to modern psychology, one finds, for example, the following definition of the concept in Mussen: [1] Identification may be regarded as a learned drive or motive to be like another individual. One thinks, behaves and feels as though the other person's characteristics were one's own. -- By thus stepping into someone else's shoes and playing his/her role one learns other's ways of behaving, thinking and feeling. Thus, identification is an important mechanism for social learning, which is distinguished from other learning methods, such as direct teaching or reward and punishment.

What conditions, then, encourage or make identification possible? Kagan, for example, says: [2] The model for identification must be a source of warmth and need-satisfaction. The child must believe that the model can manage tasks and problems that are important to the child. And the child must perceive certain similarities -- psychic and physical -- between the model and himself.

Further, Kagan and several other researchers are of the opinion that the child -- through the act of identifying -- at the same time himself experiences the positive feeling originally associated with the model. Thus, besides being an important means of social learning, many assume that identification in itself has a need-satisfying function. 3)

According to the behavioral sciences the identification process therefore occurs primarily between the child and persons closely related to the child, such as parents. Every parent knows how children like to pretend they are Mother or Father, and how at such times they will, for example, scold themselves, using arguments commonly used by the parents. As the child grows up, he finds new objects of identification -- teachers, other adults, playmates and even characters in television, films, books and other mass media. In this way the identification process continues as long as one lives.

The mass media doubtless offer numerous attractive objects of identification for need-satisfaction and social learning, which are often lacking in one's everyday life: "rich and powerful personalities, love partners and friends, artists and criminals, saints and neurotics". 4) Nevertheless, we may assume with some certainty that identification with the content of mass media does not play as decisive a role in the socialization process as identification with parents and other nearby or more intimately related persons. Many factors distinguish mass communication from personal communication 5) and one should not forget that these factors affect identification with media content as well. Research has also shown that personal influence is generally greater than influence via mass communication. -- At the same time, however, we may assume that children whose relations to parents and playmates are less harmonious tend to seek models in the world of the mass media to a greater extent. They may also be assumed to seek other kinds of models. It has been shown, for example, that those children who watch most television and go to the movies most frequently, as well as those who prefer more violent programs and films, often do not have particularly positive relations to the people around them. Children with such relations are also those most influenced by what they have seen. 6)

In the following discussion we shall primarily treat identification in relation to mass media. A major difficulty here is the fact that the concept of identification has been used quite diffusely and with many meanings in the mass media debate, as it has in mass communication research, as well. This is true both in Scandinavia and in other countries. And, the fact that it has been difficult to reach agreement on the actual nature of mass media identification has made it easy to maintain, on the basis of one's personal beliefs, either that identification is important for audience reactions and understanding and the effects of mass media content or that identification is of no greater importance in this respect.

In our opinion, it might be reasonable as a point of departure to use a comprehensive psychological definition of identification also when it comes to identification in the mass communication process, only thereafter modifying the concept according to the peculiarities of the communication in question. Some few mass communication researchers have indeed formulated definitions which largely correspond to prevalent psychological definitions. 7) But, as will be apparent in the following discussion, most definitions used in mass communication research lack such a reference, and some are even somewhat contradictory. Furthermore, this lack of conceptual clarity has kept participants in the mass media debate and mass media researchers from treating the concept as a whole. Rather, they have tended to concentrate on various specific aspects of the concept.

Furhammar 8) has attempted to survey these specific aspects. He distinguishes three different areas of meaning commonly referred to in discussions of mass media identification:

1. Identification as a product of the psychological setting: Some relate identification to certain personality characteristics of those who identify themselves and to certain conditions prevailing at the time of the act of identification. -- An example of this area of meaning might be that a red-headed football-playing pre-schooler identifies with a red-headed football-playing pre-schooler in a film.

2. Identification as an emotional state: Some relate identification to involvement and "choosing sides" during the act of film viewing. -- An example of this might be that the viewer becomes so involved in the film that he "pulls for the hero" and therefore is far more upset when the hero is hurt than when the villain is hurt.

3. Identification as a personality-forming consequence: Some relate identification to a certain consequence of the film viewing. -- For example: Identification causes the viewer after the film to adopt certain gestures or manners of expression used by the hero.

These three areas of meaning naturally overlap. While they cannot be said to comprise one or several actual definitions of identification, they nevertheless give an idea of what, on the whole, the meaning of the concept is when used with respect to mass communication.

> Some examples of specific aspects and expressions we have come across in the mass communication literature are the following:
>
> The concept of sympathy has in several studies been used as a synonym for identification. This is also true of some

Scandinavian studies, to be treated in the next section. Even though the fact that one likes someone sometimes can mean identification, sympathy hardly seems to cover all aspects of the concept.

The concept of involvement or empathy in a general sense (inlevelse) appears from time to time, and has also been used in place of identification. The same can be said, however, of this concept as of sympathy.

The concept of empathy, in the sense used by Lerner, [9] appears more and more often in the literature. Lerner's empathy signifies the ability to experience the situation of others. Several researchers have used the term synonymously with identification. It is, of course, closely related, but rather concerns -- as we see it -- the capacity to understand how many different persons think and feel, thus, even those who, for example, are not a source of warmth and need-satisfaction.

The concept of loss of identity has been used by Emery and others. It implies that the individual in the viewing situation temporarily loses his self-consciousness, in which condition his identity is transformed so that he finds himself in the hero's world and experiences the hero's feelings and reactions. [10] Neither does this concept, however, seem to encompass the phenomenon identification in its entirety. According to the research literature mass media identification appears very seldom so strong as to cause the viewer to lose his identity entirely when he enters into that of another person. We believe, rather, that identification implies a synthesis of the individual's identity and that of the object of identification. Furthermore, loss of ego-consciousness may certainly occur as a consequence of many other forms of emotional involvement besides identification.

The concept of projection has been proposed by Mitry. [11] He considers projection more appropriate a term than identification, as, in his view, "identification" occurs because the viewer more or less consciously bestows his own personality upon the object of identification. Thus, projection would seem to indicate the opposite of the concept of loss of identity. One of the arguments mentioned above may also apply to projection: It is more reasonable to assume that identification implies an interplay of the respective characteristics of viewer and identification object.

The concept of imitation is quite common. Within psychology imitation is often considered a part of the identification process. Some have pointed out, however, that imitation is a conscious process, whereas identification is

at least partly unconscious. [12] Within mass communication research imitation is treated as an effect of mass media use. For example, children have been shown to imitate a certain amount of aggressive and asocial behavior from television. [13] Mass communication researchers often assume, however, that identification has preceded the imitation. This assumption is supported by some results, such as those indicating that if viewers consider film violence "justified" (i.e. the perpetrator of violence is described as sympathetic and/or the victim of the violence as unpleasant), this will have greater influence on the aggressivity of the viewers than the act of violence itself. [14] Nevertheless, we feel that imitation and identification should be kept separate; imitation can be based on identification but does not necessarily mean that identification has occurred.

The concept of model learning or observational learning has attracted increased attention in recent years. Within mass communication research, it has, as has the concept of imitation, mostly appeared in the studies on aggression. In contrast to imitation, which concerns the copying of the same behavior, model learning can result in the same behavior or in behavior symbolically equivalent to that of the model. [15] Viewers' aggressivity following film viewing has thus taken other forms than that demonstrated in the film. [16] In relation to identification, however, we hold much the same view as with respect to imitation: Model learning should be considered a consequence of mass media consumption and need not always be preceded by identification.

The concept of suggestion is used more sporadically. Neither do we consider this concept to embrace all aspects of identification. Rather, it is more a particular effect, often involving physical symptoms, as, for example, when viewers experience thirst when viewing a film set in an arid desert.

Having thus presented a catalogue of examples, we shall turn to a classification suggested occasionally in the mass communication literature, [17] which treats identification in another perspective, namely, the distinction between similarity-identification and wishful identification.

Similarity-identification means that the receiver of, for example, a program or film recognizes himself, his environment or his situation in the program or film. A 7-year-old school-girl in Stockholm may thus similarity-identify with a 7-year-old school-girl in Stockholm in a TV-program. But where do the limits lie? Will the 7-year-old identify with a 10-year-old? With a school-girl from the countryside? With a school-girl in India?

And at what point does similarity-identification verge into wishful identification? Wishful identification refers to the case of the receiver of a program or film who wishes to be the hero or heroine or wishes to be in a corresponding situation or milieu. -- Among the by-products of wishful identification is the circumstance that one may come to admire a certain actor or actress, i.e. the identification is transferred to the person playing the role.

Finally, we should like to point out that many within the field of mass communication consider that identification occurs not only with persons but also with situations or milieux, as was also noted in conjunction with the last-named classification. Maletzke further asserts that it is possible to identify oneself in a relationship: [18] The object of one's identification may represent, say, the father, while the individual who is identifying may feel and behave like, say, the son, or vice versa.

Thus, the concept of identification is quite fluid, and it is no wonder if the person who now wants to select the most valid definition experiences uncertainty. The definition we ourselves have arrived at is therefore partly theoretically and partly empirically based, that is to say, we have examined the definitions presented in this section in the light of those empirical results which will be treated in the following section as well as those hypotheses and critical reflections the results have inspired.

In our view, then, identification is a process in which the individual consciously or unconsciously seeks to reinforce and expand his identity. Generally speaking, we thus adhere to the psychological, comprehensive views of the concept presented in the beginning of the discussion. More precisely, we consider identification to imply that an individual consciously or unconsciously recognizes himself in or wishes to be another individual, so that he becomes involved in that individual and vicariously participates in his or her activities, feelings and thoughts. As a consequence, the individual derives greater motivation for activities, feelings and thoughts of his own. -- Identification may in this way also occur with a milieu or a situation or in a relationship as the object.

In its more precise form, our definition deviates partly from the definitions presented above. As it will be further illuminated in the next section, we shall save our motivation and elaboration of its meaning until the third section (see page 27).

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In presenting the results of the Scandinavian mass communication studies it would be of value if we could, as a sort of common denominator, use one or several of the approaches to the identification concept outlined in the preceding section. However, this is hardly possible for the simple reason that very few, actually only a couple of, Scandinavian studies of children and mass media have had the study of identification as their principal aim. Rather, individual results pertaining to identification turn up sporadically in studies of quite various sorts with varying aims. And, taken together, these studies have concentrated on quite few and similar aspects of identification. Consequently, the gap between theory and practice with respect to identification is very wide.

Therefore, we have chosen to present the studies according to their subject matter, and to reserve our attempt to treat the relationships between the empirical results and the more theoretical points of departure for the third section. In that section we shall, among other things, survey the definitions employed in the Scandinavian studies, and, on the basis of that survey, discuss the focus of research up to now (page 23).

But it must be noted that the limited number of studies and their similar approaches to identification make it difficult, also with respect to the content of studies, to treat children and identification in the mass communication process in any comprehensive manner.

Our criterion in the selection of studies to be considered here has been that the authors themselves use the term identification in their studies. There are a couple of exceptions, where, instead, our own judgment has been that the results concern identification or may be taken as indicators of identification. We retain the author's terminology, however.

It should be stressed that the studies differ quite radically in the methodology employed. Some are large representative surveys, while others are experiments or small intensive studies. The measures of identification vary from use of a single indirect question to a few cases involving composite indices. Qualitative measures have also been used. The number of children in the studies varies, too, as do the age-groups considered.

Finally, it must be noted that the international research also offers only scattered and quite one-sided results, and consequently can back the Scandinavian studies up to only a limited extent.

Accordingly, we should like to emphasize that each individual result reviewed here need not definitely mean identification. Rather, it may be a question of -- or be interpreted by others than the authors of the studies to indicate -- a condition for, a symptom of or an effect of identification.

Despite all the above reservations, we feel the review of the studies has nevertheless been of value. It has yielded more certain results than individual studies can yield, it has in itself led to a number of new conclusions, and it has given rise to several hypotheses for future research on identification.

The results will be treated under two headings. Under the first of these we shall treat which children identify themselves and with whom they identify. Here we shall consider the frequently raised question of whether children identify with children appearing in mass media. Further, we shall look into the interplay between the various characteristics of the child on the one hand, and those of the programs, films, etc. on the other, in relation to identification.

Under the second heading we shall treat issues pertaining to the importance of identification for the effects of mass communication. Here the research mainly focuses on emotional effects, as for example fear, but to some extent on cognitive and behavioral effects as well.

Which children identify and with whom do they identify?

A recurring question is whether certain children constantly identify, while certain others do not, i.e. whether or not the ability to identify is a more or less stable personality characteristic. Our survey of the studies has not revealed any evidence that such is the case. On the contrary, von Feilitzen has shown that most children identify relatively frequently in their use of the mass media, and that television and films are the most important media in this respect. [19] It has also been found that the proportion of children who identify with persons and events portrayed on television is greater among children who view much television than among those who view little (von Feilitzen and Linné). [20]

The answer to the question of whether certain children identify should probably rather be sought in the circumstances surrounding the child. In other words, different children identify with different objects in different situations. Many examples of this will be reported below.

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from the body of Scandinavian research is that children in mass media are important to children. Children most often identify with children. For example:

Olsson and Preisler studied 4-6 year-olds' reactions to a number of radio programs for children. [21] In one program a father and his daughter talk with each other. The girl asks questions, and her father explains various things to her. Most of the children in the study perceived very well that it was a father and a daughter who discussed various subjects, such as being ugly or fat, birth and death. The program had an undesired effect, however, which may be due to identification: Although the girl in the program expressed the "wrong" ideas and the father the

"correct" ones, what the children in the study recalled of the program content was more closely related to the girl's comments.

In a Danish children's news program intended for 10-12 year-olds, some reporters were children -- albeit better informed and verbally equipped than usual for their age. The idea behind this was to make the news more comprehensible and relevant to questions which children ask. A great majority of the children in the study did, indeed, prefer the junior reporters to the adults. Among other things, the news items were easier to understand and the information was more amusing (Halloran and Eyre-Brook). 22)

In a study conducted by von Feilitzen and Linné one part concerned pre-school children's reactions to some popular adult television series. 23) The results indicated that children reacted more often in fear -- albeit mixed with delight -- when viewing a Swedish family series about some boys' adventures at the turn of the century than they did when viewing an American Western and an American spy-thriller, both of which consciously build on the element of suspense. One explanation of this result was that Swedish children could more easily identify with the main character and the milieu portrayed in the Swedish series than in the other two series. 24)

A study by Sundqvist, in which mothers were asked to describe their children's reactions to radio programs, provides a fourth example. 25) The results showed that the vast majority of 4-7 year-olds become generally more interested when children participate in the programs. Furthermore, interest increases more often, the younger the child audience.

These examples may give the impression that children always identify with children in mass media. But such a conclusion is not wholly warranted. Some studies have produced contrary results. A pre-test of a school-TV program about loneliness, among other things, revealed that the 7 year-olds' attention to the program dropped precisely during those segments in which children appeared (Bonnevier) 26) (for an alternative interpretation of this result, however, see page 19). The producer of a TV-program about the lives of pigs and sheep for 3-5 year-olds included studio segments featuring a group of children in a deliberate attempt to provide the audience with an opportunity to identify. The intended identification probably failed to occur: The studio segments turned out to be the least engaging parts of the program for the children (Filipson and Schyller). 27)

Preisler offers an interesting comparative example. 28) A pre-school TV-program about teeth included a segment in which a girl of pre-school age brushed her teeth. Despite the nearness in age, the audience did not pay very much attention to this scene. One may assume that identification was not particularly strong or that it did not occur at all, since this situation seemed to be quite trivial to the children. Another TV-program, about going to the dentist, showed a girl of five being given

a dental examination. This segment aroused the child audience's rapt attention. The children were totally involved in the girl's situation -- half of them sat open-mouthed and closely followed the dentist's every move as he examined the girl's teeth.

Thus, there is no unqualified answer to the question of whether children identify with children in mass media. In our survey of the studies we feel we have found certain tendencies as to when it occurs and when it does not, but, as the subject is quite complex, we should like to hold these hypotheses for the moment and first introduce some further results and arguments about children's identification, in order to clarify the hypotheses.

Individual characteristics

One clear-cut result, confirmed in study after study, is that identification occurs with members of the same sex.

For example: In order to determine the objects of children's identification, Starck and Schyller studied 4-6 year-olds' preferences for various figures in television programs for preschool children. [29] Both boys and girls preferred children to adults, according to their comments prior to having seen any program. Boys preferred boys, and girls girls. Age was not so important. Least liked, however, were children of the same age as oneself but of the opposite sex. Thus, age was importance in this respect.

Similar results were obtained in for example a Norwegian study by Ørjasaeter. [30] The 7 year-olds identified above all with children in a stage-play, and of these with those of the same sex as themselves. [31]

The tendency that mass media identification is related to the same sex applies to adults as well. [32] Psychological and sociological practice and theorybuilding also emphasize sex-identification as one of the primary features of the socialization process.

Another individual characteristic shown to play a role in identification is nationality. Filipson and Wachtmeister studied a series of television programs, in which a Swedish sister and brother and two immigrant boys, a Jugoslav and a Finn, solved various mysteries. [33] The series was primarily aimed at children aged 7 to 12, and one of the goals was to stimulate contact and cooperation between Swedish children and immigrant children. Roughly one-third of the children in the study identified with someone. The girls (both Swedish and immigrants) identified primarily with the girl in the series, a few, however, with the Jugoslav boy. The boys usually identified with that boy which was of their own nationality. None of the boys identified with the girl in the series.

Thus, nationality played a prime role in the identification process. But it is also apparent that sex-identification was of

greater importance here than nationality among immigrant girls. One should recall that the Swedish girl was the only girl in the series.

As noted above, however, a few of the girls identified with a boy. Sennton, too, has found that some girls identified with male figures in films, even though attractive female characters also appeared. 34)

Thus, an interesting observation is that although girls usually identify with girls, they seem more able to break the pattern of sex-role mores than boys. One explanation may lie in the fact that Western cultures often sanction "Tom-boy" behavior on the part of a girl. That some boys enjoy doing "the things girls do" is far less accepted. An opposite expression of "Tom-boy" hardly exists, at least not in any positive sense. Thus, girls enjoy a greater degree of flexibility between various roles.

In summary, one can state that individual characteristics play a role with respect to whom one identifies with. 35) It is likely that many other such characteristics than those found in past studies also may affect one's disposition to identify. 36)

Social characteristics

Some research results demonstrate that the individual's social situation influences identification. These have emerged in a study by Almers. 37)

The study concerns, among other things, two television programs of quite different sorts. The first of these is Swedish and portrays three boys being together during an afternoon. Their play culminates in one of the boys being tied up and abandoned by the other two. One of the two is doubtful about their behavior, while the other is the dominant "leader". The film is quite realistic, and the characters are of the same age as the children in the study (roughly 12 years).

The other program is a segment in an American detective series of a more fictionalized sort, several segments of which have been shown on Swedish television. The series is about three teen-agers, one girl and two boys, who help the police solve various crime cases. The girl and one of the youths are white; the other youth is black.

A general result was that the children in the study identified with the main characters and not with any minor characters.

Further, more than half the children identified with someone in the programs. Moreso in the detective-type program than in the realistic one. In the realistic program most identified with the boy who tried to act as a mediator between the "bully" and his "victim". Quite a few identified with the "victim", however. One child identified with the "bully". It might be noted parenthetically that identification with villainous, or less sympathetic, mass media figures has been encountered before. Furhammar, 38)

for example, relates a now classic case, where a 12 year-old German boy identified with the wicked stepmother-witch in the film "Snow White". Krause-Ablass, who originally reported this case, commented that the boy was severely disturbed, suffered from an inferiority complex and had poor relations with playmates and others in his environment. All these factors brought him to "choose sides" and to feel deep and sincere sympathy for the witch. 39)

That one's objects of identification sometimes may differ from those of the majority implies that identification may of course also occur with minor characters in mass media, although identification with leading roles would appear to be the rule.

Another result of the Scandinavian study was that those children who reported identifying with the victim of "mobbing" in the Swedish film, more frequently reported being "mobbed" themselves than did other children. The role of social situation with respect to identification is also reflected in the result that somewhat more children from the lower social classes identified at all. The three boys in the program were from lower middle-class homes.

It should be pointed out that all the characters in the Swedish program are boys, while roughly half the experimental audience were girls. Consequently, in this measure the girls, to the extent they identified, were "forced" to identify with a boy. No difference in the frequency of identification among boys and girls was noted.

In the American young people's detective series one of the three main figures is a girl. Most of the girls in the study (of those who identified) identified with her. A few of the girls, but none of the boys, identified with a member of the opposite sex. Most of the boys identified with the black youth, who in this particular program is most active in the solution of the crime. The white youth is more reserved or shy, and mainly children who are shy or less popular themselves identified with him -- thus, the same tendency as was observed in connection with the realistic program.

Summing up, we can once again state that individual characteristics affect one's choice of identification object. But apparently social characteristics are also relevant factors. Both socio-economic circumstances, e.g. social class membership, and personal social relations, e.g. whether or not one is popular or has been a victim of mobbing, seem to be of importance.

Similarity- and wishful identification

Looking at the results presented above, it would seem that the more like the children the figures in the mass media are, the greater the probability that children will identify with them. This is too simple a conclusion, however. Similarity is an im-

portant factor, but not the sole factor: An individual may also identify according to his desires or wishes (see the definitions on page 5).

A few researchers have treated wishful identification explicitly in their studies. Maccoby and Wilson, for example, found that boys of a certain social group tend to similarity-identify with boys belonging to the same social group, but that boys also tend to wishfully identify with film figures belonging to that social group to which they themselves would like to belong. 40)

Among the Scandinavian studies, Almers has commented upon wishful identification. 41) As noted above, she studied two programs of quite differing character -- a realistic Swedish program and a fictional American one. She was able to observe a distinct difference in identification between the two programs. The similarity-aspect was more important with regard to the realistic program, while the wishful aspect was of greater importance with regard to the detective series.

Thus, one may ask: When do these two types of identification occur? In this last-mentioned study, the decisive factor would seem to be the nature of the program content. Besides the different "atmosphere" -- mood and milieu -- of the programs, the age of the leading figures may also play in.

Of course, the nature of program content and program format have much to do with the type of identification that occurs. Thus, a certain mass media output offers greater opportunities for wishful identification and a certain output greater opportunities for similarity-identification. But the reality portrayed in a program does not always correspond to the child's perception of reality.

In our opinion, similarity- and wishful identification would appear to depend, among other things, on the following factors:

a) the actual content of the film/program, etc., as well as its subjective description of that content, and

b) the child viewer/listener and his actual situation as well as his subjective perception of himself and his situation in relation to the program/film, etc.

Take, for example, a film about a wealthy 10 year-old boy and his horse during summer holidays in the countryside. Whether or not the child in the audience will similarity- or wishfully identify will thus depend, among other things, both on how the film portrays the situation, and on how the child perceives himself (younger/older; boy/girl) and his situation (rich/poor; summers in the city/summers in the countryside; has/does not have a horse). This reasoning is extremely sketchy -- the phenomenon is of course far more complex than we have described it here.

Do, then, any research findings indicate how the character of the child and his actual situation (as well as his perception of himself and his situation) may lead to wishful identification? No, hardly any, other than those of Maccoby and Wilson. Nearly all Scandinavian studies about children's characteristics and identification have concerned similarity-identification or have not distinguished between similarity- and wishful identification.

Vilpas, however, has conducted a study using an index of identification which may be considered to measure wishful identification exclusively. [42] The study sought to determine the characteristics in Finnish 10-11 year-olds that led to identification with various well-known television personalities, both real and fictitious. Sex was found -- not surprisingly -- to be a significant factor: The boys wishfully identified with males and persons involved in adventure; the girls' favorites were most often females and attractive persons in "passive" roles. The findings with respect to the twelve other personal characteristics studied were fragmentary and unclear, however. The fact that only 32 children participated in the study may explain the spotty results. [43]

Thus, our knowledge of children's dispositions for wishful identification is microscopic. But, we feel there is certain support for the hypothesis, that more stable personal characteristics (such as sex) have the same effect with respect to both similarity- and wishful identification. Whereas more variable characteristics (e.g. rich/poor, summers in the city/countryside, has/does not have a horse) have different effects with respect to the two types of identification.

Thus, similarity- and wishful identification are not fundamentally different phenomena but rather overlap to some extent.

This leads us to another hypothesis, namely, that much of the more popular mass media output for children offers opportunities for both similarity- and wishful identification. In several children's television series, for example, it is apparent that the children in the audience both recognize themselves in the series children (same sex, age, etc.) and wish they were like the characters. The children in the programs have, for example, lenient and understanding parents, many friends, pets, etc.; the programs often show sunny summer days, and a lot of exciting things happen. To make a conscious attempt to combine the opportunities for both similarity- and wishful identification seems to be an effective means for program originators, writers, etc., to convey information, opinions, attitudes and models of behavior.

Whether or not communicators of the mass media should try to satisfy children's possible need for wishful identification is a central question that should be considered in each individual case, but far more important, we feel, is how, and the aims,

norms and values with which, one attempts to satisfy this need.

Children's identification with animals

We noted above that sex-identification is not totally invariable, at least not with respect to girls. Johansson has arrived at a finding of similar character in a study of a "Lassie" film. 44) Nearly half of the girls in the study were reported to have identified with the dog.

This result may seem a bit surprising, but children's interest in and identification with animals is a well documented phenomenon. In children's programs, films, books, comics, etc. animals are often portrayed as kind, intelligent and a little mischievous, and they are sometimes threatened by various dangers, in the face of which they are quite helpless. In other words, animals are to some extent given the same role in relation to the child as the child often has in relation to adults.

Thus, identification seems to occur when the animals in the mass media are more or less personified and/or when the receiver perceives this to be the case.

The fact that children often identify with animals has been utilized by many writers and film-makers. This is also related to another factor, namely, that younger children may have difficulties in perceiving what program and film characters of the same age say and do, since the ability to discriminate various sounds as well as several other selective mechanisms are not fully developed until well after the children reach school-age. It is therefore often easier to convey information to small children by letting an adult speak to them clearly and distinctly, while animals or dolls illustrate the action part of the message. Children also like animated films as well as comics, in which a more simple verbal and pictorial language may be combined with a wide array of identification objects. 45)

Children's identification with children

Among the first results we presented concerning children's identification were some examples which illustrated the question of whether children identify with children in mass media. Most studies indicated that this is the case, but there was also evidence to the contrary. In our review of the literature we felt we could trace certain tendencies as to when such identification occurs and when it does not, but, as the subject was quite complex, we chose to hold these hypotheses until we had introduced some further results and arguments. We have treated how individual and social factors affect the identification. Further, we have discussed the distinction between similarity- and wishful identification. In this context we noted, among other things, that the individual and social characteristics of the child seem sometimes to have the same effects and sometimes different effects with respect to similarity- and wishful identification, and that the nature of the content and format of the program/film, etc. also affects the type of identification that occurs.

This collation of various results provides in itself a partial answer to our question as to whether children identify with children in mass media. Thus, we have already pointed out certain vital conditions for such identification to occur. We shall now lay forth the hypotheses for which we have found support in the literature. Our illustrating examples will, for the sake of simplicity, concern children's television viewing behavior, but we consider the hypotheses valid for other mass media as well.

First, children's inclination to identify with children in mass media is related to age. Younger children seem to identify more readily with children in TV-programs than older children. This is related to another tendency, namely, that younger children seem to identify mainly with children of their own age, while older children rather identify with children a bit older than themselves. For example, a program about three boys' summer holidays -- a 6 year-old, a 9 year-old and a 12 year-old -- would produce the following hypothetical pattern of identification: A 6 year-old boy who watched would most likely identify with the 6 year-old boy in the program, while a 9 year-old boy would more likely identify with the 12 year-old in the program.

At what age does this change in reaction occur? One conceivable assumption is: usually around age eight. Up to the age of seven children prefer watching children's programs on television. They also watch many adult programs, but this is rather a reflection of family habits and tastes. Some results indicate that 8 year-olds begin taking a more genuine personal interest in lighter adult programming. While they still watch several children's programs, they begin to be more critical of them.

The psychological literature on child development also suggests age 8 as an age of transition. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, for example, the child then leaves the "pre-operational stage" (2-7½ years), characterized, among other things, by egocentric thinking. At this point the child enters the "stage of concrete operations" (8-11 years), in which, among other things, he or she is now able to shift between his or her own views and those of others. 46)

Secondly, it seems as though younger children tend more to similarity-identify, while older children tend more to both similarity- and wishfully identify. One reason for this may be that younger children mainly watch children's programs and that the domestically produced children's programming in Scandinavia perhaps offer greater opportunity for similarity-identification. Another reason may be, however, that younger children, as noted above, are self-centered and that their immediate surroundings are still quite unfamiliar and thrilling. Older children's orientation toward adult programs and the environment outside the family circle is evidenced in, among other things, their interest in adventure and their identification with exciting figures, i.e. older children or adults who are in some way heroic. Children in

this age-group up to age 12 would appear to have a greater need of clear moral norms; 47) for example, the norm-giving function of television ("I watch TV because it tells me what is right and wrong") is most frequently noted among children of this age. 48)

Thirdly, it appears that children identify with children in mass media primarily when the child in the program has a distinct function. In other words, when the child viewer perceives that the child actor has relevant things to say or do or in some other way contributes to the development of the story. Such a function may be lacking if, for example, small children in the program are left to say or do whatever comes to mind; as noted above, the abilities of the young viewer are limited when it comes to selecting out and perceiving that information which an adult viewer think is relevant. On the other hand, the function of the child actor may also be lacking if the child is "over-directed" so that he or she seems artificial, or if the child is merely used as a kind of stage-property.

We have discussed the question of whether or not children identify with children in mass media. And we have found that this question quite quickly becomes as uninteresting as the question of whether or not adults identify with adults. The immediate repulse is, in most cases, to reformulate the latter question into: Under what conditions do adults identify?

This should also be our concern with respect to children.

<u>What role does identification play with respect to the effects of mass communication</u>?

The debate concerning mass media identification has most often concerned the conceivable role of identification with respect to mass communication effects.

The Scandinavian studies in the areas covered above is scare. Unfortunately, studies treating identification and media effects are even fewer. Consequently, we may note already at the outset that findings concerning the interplay of identification and effects are far from complete.

This is true of the international research as well. 49)

Theoretically speaking, the effects of a mass media message may be classified in terms of, say, effects on actual behavior, cognitive effects and emotional effects. Furthermore, it is important to distinguish, among other things, between short-term and long-term effects.

We are only able to report results under the former classification, as all Scandinavian identification results of relevance here has concerned effects in the short-term.

Effects on actual behavior

The only studies of effects on actual behavior encountered concern imitation. As mentioned earlier, some students of mass communication assume that imitation is preceded by identification (cf. page 5).

In one study, some of the spontaneous responses of mothers concerning their children's TV-viewing behavior indicate that identification has indeed preceded imitation (Linné): [50] Here 3-9 year-olds acted out themes from, for example, popular Swedish children's series and American Westerns and detective films on television. Some children who had watched Westerns played cowboys, had "gunfights" and fist-fights or acted tough like a character in the film. -- Other responses in the same study only show that imitation has occurred: Here it was indicated that children generally enjoy imitating the content of television programs. They exercise with TV, dance ballet and do circus numbers.

Other studies, too, report imitation following children's television programs. [51] One study also points out that children imitate a certain amount of aggressive behavior from films. [52]

Provided the above assumption is correct, these results would thus indicate that identification can influence children's actual behavior in terms of imitation.

Cognitive effects

Two research results mentioned in another context (pages 8 - 9) are of interest also with respect to the influence of identification on cognitive effects: In one study 4-6 year-olds, having listened to a radio program, most often recalled the girl's "wrong" comments instead of the "correct" explanations offered by her father. -- In another study 10-12 year-olds preferred junior reporters to adult reporters in a news program because, among other things, the news were easier to understand and the information was more amusing.

Yet another Scandinavian study can be included under this heading. Its results were less unequivocal, however:

In the study by Almers [53] mentioned above, the two programs led to contrasting effects. Regarding the American youth thriller, identification seemed to be decisive with respect to which of the characters the viewers best remembered, since most viewers had the best recollection of the figure they identified with. This was not true, however, of the more realistic Swedish program, in which many viewers identified with and best remembered quite different figures.

How might one explain this difference? One reason may be that the children who watched the thriller had a positive estimation of their objects of identification and said they would like to behave like them. A majority of the children who watched the

more realistic program, however, did not like their object of identification best. Neither did most of them feel they would behave like the character they identified with.

These latter results may also explain why no effects of the realistic program were observed with respect to the children's attitudes to mobbing, regardless of whether or not the children identified with someone in the program. The differential effects of the two programs may also be viewed in the light of the fact that the realistic program was judged to be less interesting and more complex than the thriller.

By way of summary, then, one can say that identification seems sometimes able to influence cognitive effects. A hypothesis which the latter study supports is that the occurrence or absence of the effects depends on one's feeling for the object of identification as well as one's inclination to act in relation to the behavior of the object of identification. These distinctions of the identification phenomenon have not been elaborated upon in the literature, but it seems fruitful to keep them in mind.

One line of reasoning in support of this hypothesis is the following: A television program intended for classroom television included some segments in which children were interviewed on "sensitive" subjects, such as loneliness. The program producers included these segments in a conscious attempt to offer an opportunity for identification in order to stimulate insight among the viewers into the problem of loneliness. The children interviewed were of the same age as the intended audience. The study showed, however, that viewers' attention declined during these very segments 54) (see also page 9). -- The most immediate interpretation is that the viewers nevertheless did not feel the children in the program had any particular function, i.e. had anything relevant to say, and thus did not identify with them. On the other hand -- might not the opposite, less obvious interpretation, namely, that the viewers <u>did</u> identify, also explain the result? By identifying, there may have arisen a conflict vis-a-vis the external classroom situation, in the face of which the viewers reacted in avoidance of the program and perhaps turned to their neighbor with some negative comment.

With this assumption, we should like to point out the possibility that although identification occurs, it need not always lead to the desired effect, the effect intended by the producers of the program, film, etc. As in the prior study, it seems important to ascertain, among other things, whether or not the viewer has any motivation for a given behavior. Thus, identification may well occur in both cases, but viewers of the school-TV program had no motivation for receiving the information transmitted in the interview segments. It is conceivable that conflicts arise, both vis-a-vis the immediate environment and within the viewer or the program itself. It is thus reasonable to assume that conflicts of this sort more often arise when the program portrays a complex reality, than when the characters, the milieu, the situation and the human relations in the program are more stereotyped or more schematically portrayed "in black and white".

Emotional effects

We can present somewhat more findings under this heading than was the case regarding effects on actual behavior and cognitive effects. The studies here treat attitudes [55] following radio and television programs and films as well as fear arousal.

One type of attitude following a program is that one likes the program. Brolin asked 3-9 year-olds to report why they liked or disliked every program they viewed or listened to during one week. [56] One group of responses consisted of the motives of identification or involvement: The reasons the children liked these programs were that the characters in the programs were of the same age as themselves and that they had involved themselves in the programs to the extent that they felt themselves to be identical with the children in the programs. The Astrid Lindgren series "Adventures on Saltkråkan", for example, was liked particularly for these reasons. Children's motivations varied from liking the girl Tjorven and the boy Pelle and Pelle's pet rabbit to such motivations as: "I feel that I am Pelle and Pelle is me" (boy of 7) and "I feel as though I were on the island (-- Saltkråkan)" (girl of 9).

In a Finnish study Minkkinen studied the influence of a film on viewers' attitudes to a moral problem. [57] The film treated the problem of assuming responsibility for other people. Some figures in the film were positive to assuming such responsibility, while others were more disinterested in their behavior. The viewers who identified with characters expressing positive attitudes toward the problem were themselves, following the film, more positive to assume responsibility for others.

Thus, we may again conclude that identification seems to exert an influence on mass communication effects, in this case attitudes.

How about fear arousal, then? At the beginning of the results section of this report we took up three cases in which identification with elements in TV programs had led to fear on the part of the viewing children (see page 9 and note 24). In one case more fear arousal was associated with a Swedish family series about some boys' adventures at the turn of the century than with an American Western and an American spy-thriller. In two cases fear-arousal occurred after children's programs in which the acting children were confronted with something unpleasant or dangerous.

Brolin [58] and Linné [59] have studied the concept of fear in a more comprehensive frame of reference. According to their findings, fear may range from wishful thrills to real fright, which may linger for some time. Further, their results indicate that of all radio and television programming, younger children tend to name various children's programs as sources of fear. The authors conclude that this probably derives from two factors:

(1) that children in these age-groups watch mostly children's programs, and (2) that children have greater opportunities to identify with the content of these programs than with that of adult programming. Among the fear-arousing situations most commonly mentioned by the children in the studies are a child in the program being threatened by an adult or by some danger, or an animal in a similar situation.

"Adventures on Saltkråkan" was one of the programs frequently arousing fear. One segment includes a scene in which two children out in a row-boat happen to drop the oars. The situation is quickly resolved. To an adult this scene appears almost idyllic, but precisely this scene many child viewers mentioned as frightening. Other scenes which caused fear were, for example, when the dog or the rabbit were threatened by various dangers.

Interestingly, we should keep in mind that identification with this program also contributed to its great popularity. Thus, it seems as though identification with the characters in a program can augment the reactions to one and the same program both with respect to "positive" and with respect to "negative" effects. 60)

Some summarizing comments on identification and effects

May one, then, on the basis of these research results claim that identification plays a significant role with respect to various types of mass communication effects? The remaining uncertainty concerning the role of identification is a consequence, as we see it, of mainly the following three factors:

First, as noted above, few studies have treated media effects in relation to identification, and these few have considered only a few types of effects.

Secondly, a couple of results have indicated that identification has not influenced the effects, that is to say, the effects the program producer or the researcher anticipated.

Thirdly, the methodology in the various studies is quite varied. In several studies, where identification was found to influence effects, no formal measures of identification were employed. Rather, one has "proceeded backwards" -- the effects of the communication were first established and then identification was assumed to have taken place.

Of course, such an approach is not peculiar to research on identification; this alternative course of investigation is applied, generally speaking, throughout the behavioral sciences. The behavioral sciences often make use of numerous abstract concepts or "inferred variables" such as intelligence, attitude, function, etc., which are not observable in the actual or manifest behavior. With respect to these one must resort either to more philosophically speculative methods or to more positivistic quantitative constructs.

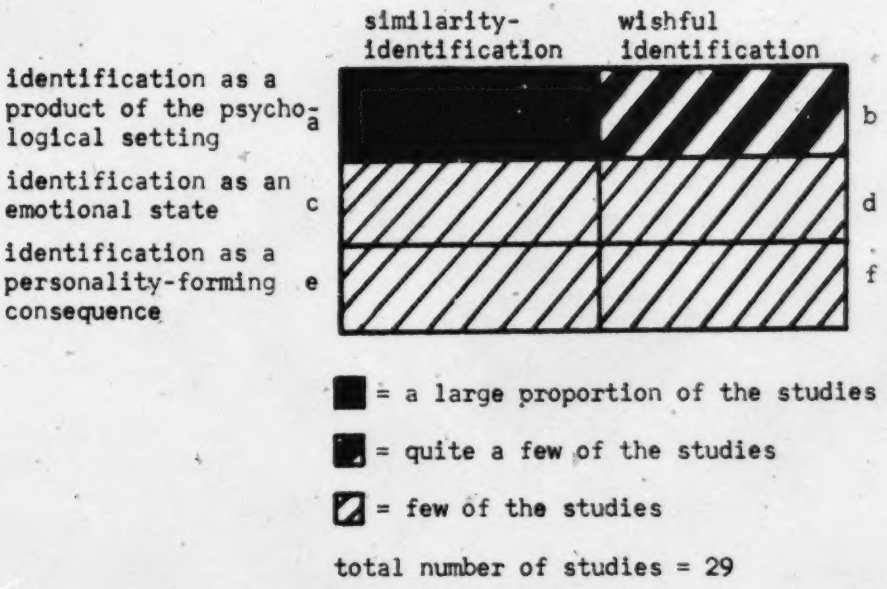
Despite these sources of uncertainty, it would appear that identification most probably does have significance with respect to the effects of mass communication, since the majority of the studies have so indicated. It is important to point out that this includes both intended effects of the mediated message as well as unanticipated or unintentional effects, such as fear or fright.

DISCUSSION, CRITICISM AND DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

The focus of past research

In the first section of this report we began our discussion of the meaning of identification with presenting some psychological approaches to the concept. We also noted that the definitions used in the field of mass communication were seldom directly related to these approaches. Having inventoried the Scandinavian mass communication studies treating children and identification, we find that the same applies here as well. Of the studies we found, actually only one was based on a theoretical psychological frame of reference. 61)

Among other things, we then presented an attempt to systematize the various specific aspects of the concept, as used within mass communication research and mass media debate, in terms of three areas of meaning: identification as a product of the psychological setting, identification as an emotional state, and identification as a personality-forming consequence. 62) The identification concept was also broken down in terms of the two aspects of similarity-identification and wishful identification. If one combines these dimensions and classifies the Scandinavian studies according to them, one obtains the following distribution:



Note: A classification of the absolute number of studies in each cell would produce a non-reliable result, as the researchers have not always explicitly stated their definitions of the concept identification. -- Studies treating more than one of the six areas have been recorded in all the relevant cells.

As indicated in the matrix, the largest proportion of studies have concerned identification as a product of the psychological setting (cells a and b). These studies have treated both similarity-identification and wishful identification, but studies of the former are more numerous. Considerably fewer studies have treated identification as an emotional state, either with respect to similarity-identification or wishful identification (cells c and d). The same is true of identification as a personality-forming consequence (cells e and f). The studies here are few and they are roughly equally distributed between similarity- and wishful identification.

Thus, the research results mainly concern similarity-identification and identification as a product of the psychological setting. Be that as it may, wishful identification is the type of identification most commonly referred to in the public debate (see page 1). Similarly, identification as an emotional state and identification as a personality-forming consequence is debated at least as often as identification as a product of the psychological setting. Indeed, the most frequent topic of debate would appear to be wishful identification in relation to identification as a personality-forming consequence, i.e. wishful identification as a cause of various effects -- in terms of the above matrix, then, the cell diametrically opposite the one focused in previous research.

What is the source of this discrepancy? Several explanations present themselves.

Wishful identification has commonly been related to such program, film and other mass media output of a fictional and entertaining character, which portrays the world and people in terms of stereotypes. The Scandinavian studies which concern childrens' identification with mass media content, however, have often concentrated on radio and television programs which have the aim of informing or activating the audience. And the producers of such programming have tried to portray their characters more realistically, which fact may explain why similarity-identification has dominated the researchers' thinking.

A closely related explanation lies in the fact that mass communication research has largely been commissioned and paid for by the mass media organizations, and consequently has been adapted to their desires. These desires have concerned other problems than wishful identification. In Scandinavia this may be because much of the fictional mass media output treated in the public debate is imported material. And the research studies have usually concerned the domestically produced output, despite the fact that imports, in the case of television, for example, comprise nearly fifty percent of total programming.

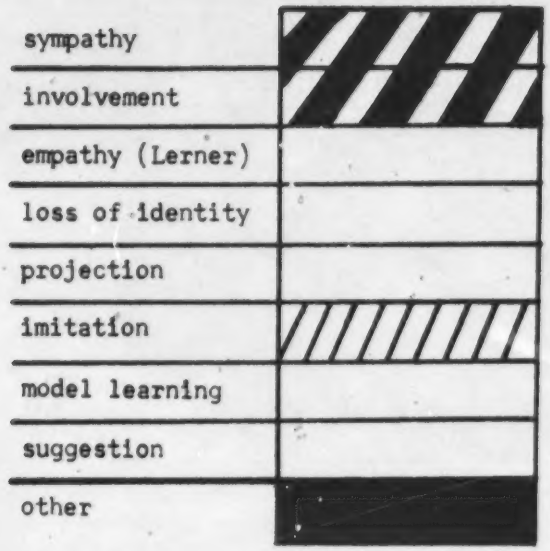
These two explanations, however, only pertain to the differential interest in similarity- and wishful identification, respectively.

What about the other dimension of the matrix? While we have suggested that the mass media organizations, consciously or unconsciously, have been the main source of the skewed focus of research with respect to the first dimension, it is here reasonable to seek explanations among researchers as well.

Both emotional state and personality-forming consequence are more difficult to measure than identification as a product of the psychological setting. Emotion is a broad concept and often refers to a highly individual phenomen. Mass communication research in most cases has encountered obvious difficulty in measuring the emotional state of the individual in any more than a superficial sense, particularly when it comes to positive feelings. A similar explanation is applicable to personality-forming consequence. So many researchers have failed to measure particularly deeper long-term effects and so many stress the methodological problems associated with such studies, that most other researchers simply resign themselves or in any case postpone initiating these often comprehensive studies, until they are more sure of their methodology. Furthermore, if the long-term effects are to be related to as ambiguous a concept as identification, the difficulty of the task is compounded.

Thus, the researchers' methodological difficulties and lack of a theoretical frame of reference when it comes to identification, together with the influences of the mass media organizations, have contributed to the loss of a whole-view perspective on the concept: Commentators and polemicists have developed their approach, producers and program personnel theirs, and researchers find themselves in an ambivalent, often unaware middle-ground.

Up to now we have used the more comprehensive dimensions mentioned in the introductory section of this report to survey the Scandinavian studies as regards identification. However, we also mentioned some examples of specific aspects and expressions used in the mass communication literature. These were sympathy, involvement, Lerner's empathy, loss of identity, projection, imitation, model learning, and suggestion. These concepts were said either to cover a limited aspect of identification, to have been used as synonyms of identification, or to signify a consequence of identification. It may be interesting to see how the Scandinavian studies of children relate to these aspects as well. The following pattern of distribution emerges:



■ = a large proportion of the studies

▩ = quite a few of the studies

▨ = few of the studies

□ = no study

total number of studies = 29

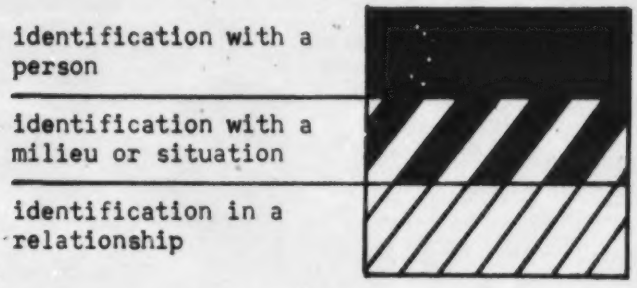
Note: A classification of the absolute number of studies in each cell would produce a non-reliable result, as the researchers have not always explicitly stated their definitions of the concept identification. -- Studies treating more than one aspect have been recorded in all the relevant cells.

Thus, five of the concepts -- Lerner's empathy, loss of identify, projection, model learning and suggestion -- have not been used in any of the Scandinavian studies. On the other hand, sympathy and involvement have been used to measure identification quite frequently. Imitation has also been studied to some extent. The category "other" includes other aspects used as well as the studies mentioned above that have not directly measured identification but assumed that it has occurred.

It is not possible to draw any more general conclusions from this matrix, as the sample considered is not complete. In addition to our earlier critique of these concepts (pages 3 - 5) we may state, however, that widespread use of a concept need not imply that it is highly valid. Almers 63) and Maccoby and Wilson 64) have found the sympathy aspect, for example, to be a less

reliable measure of identification. As was the case with regard to the preceding matrix, one may thus assume that methodological difficulties, among other things, have influenced the choice of definitions.

Lastly, we have classified the Scandinavian studies of children according to whether they have considered identification with a person, identification with a milieu or situation, or identification in a relationship:



■ = a large proportion of the studies

■ = quite a few of the studies

▨ = few of the studies

total number of studies = 29

Note: Studies treating more than one type of identification have been recorded in all the relevant cells.

The conclusion is that the researchers most often have considered children's identification with a person. Some, however, have also considered identification with a milieu or situation, while identification in a relationship has been thought of only very seldom.

Some reflections concerning the definition of identification

In the first section we observed that a good deal of conceptual confusion prevails concerning the meaning of identification. Does, then, our survey in the second section of the Scandinavian mass communication studies on children and identification offer any help in formulating a meaningful definition?

The matrices in the preceding segment -- where we classified these studies according to all those aspects of the concept identification that were presented at the beginning -- revealed that the studies largely lack a theoretical foundation concerning

identification. Rather, various other factors have led to emphasis on other aspects of identification than those taken up, for example, in the public debate.

Thus, we perceive the need for a definition of identification in the mass communication process firmly based in a comprehensive psychological approach. We have chosen the following general definition as a point of departure: Identification is a process in which the individual consciously or unconsciously seeks to reinforce and expand his identity. (See also page 6)

Furthermore, we feel that a more precise definition should attempt to cover this multi-dimensional phenomenon by including several aspects of the concept. The Scandinavian studies have often considered only a single aspect. 65)

The findings and hypotheses reported in the second section then give rise to some reflections as to which aspects of the concept may be the most fruitful:

First, the distinction between similarity- and wishful identification would appear to be an important one. In other words, we feel that identification implies, among other things, "that an individual consciously or unconsciously recognizes himself in a certain person (in a certain milieu or situation, in a certain relationship) or wishes to be a certain person (in a certain milieu or situation, in a certain relationship), or both". Indeed, identification would often seem to consist of a combination of the two.

Secondly, we feel that identification implies emotional involvement, an aspect considered in most theory and empirical research -- albeit to varying degrees. The next phase of identification may thus be expressed in "that the individual (as a consequence of the first phase) becomes involved in the person (the milieu/situation, the relationship) and vicariously participates in his/her/its activities, feelings and thoughts".

Taken together -- but not, in our view, individually -- the above aspects may qualify as a rather broad definition of identification.

We believe, however, there is yet another aspect of identification which, although neglected, is very important. We have called it readiness, disposition or motivation. A third phase of identification implies then "that the individual (as a consequence of the two preceding phases) derives greater motivation for activities, feelings and thoughts of his own". The reason why we consider motivation important is that identification as a phenomenon is itself interesting mainly if it has a consequence, in the form of, say, cognitive or emotional effects or effects on actual behavior. Identification, after all, is an "inferred variable", that is, an abstraction assumed on the basis of various

observations, but which cannot be observed directly. In the case of mass media, identification is inferred between exposure and the consequence of the identification. And some research results and assumptions indicate that if a certain consequence of identification is to occur, there must exist a corresponding disposition on the part of the individual. This motivation should of course not be regarded -- as neither of the two preceding phases should be regarded -- invariably to imply a conscious process; it may also be more or less unconscious.

Introduction of the motivation aspect renders the definition of identification more stringent. Thus, motivation is not always a consequence of one's recognizing oneself/wishing to be and thereby becoming involved.

To summarize, then, we consider identification to imply that an individual consciously or unconsciously recognizes himself in or wishes to be another individual, so that he becomes involved in that individual and vicariously participates in his or her activities, feelings and thoughts. As a consequence, the individual derives greater motivation for activities, feelings and thoughts of his own. -- Identification may in this way also occur with a milieu or a situation or in a relationship as the object. (See also page 6)
According to this definition, identification may imply either a positive or a negative form of emotional involvement for the individual who identifies. Similarly, identification need not always imply a readiness to act, feel or think exactly like the object of one's identification. The motivation may take other forms of expression as well.

The crucial point is that identification occurs when the three phases outlined above are mutually congruent in the individual, that is, when no conflict or contradiction arises between the phases in the process. It may be added that, by definition, congruence between these components will be more likely if the first phase concerns wishful identification than if it concerns similarity-identification: It is more likely that one will be motivated if one wishes to be a certain person (in a certain situation, etc.) than if one recognizes oneself in a certain person (etc.). -- Examples of non-congruence in connection to similarity-identification were discussed under the heading "Cognitive effects" (page 18).

Consequently, when the mass media output offers opportunities for wishful and similarity-identification, wishful identification occurs more frequently. Generally speaking, it is therefore also likely that wishful identification more often has significance with respect to the effects of mass communication.

Finally, we find it essential, when defining identification, to take the intensity of identification into consideration. The degree of similarity and the degree of desire to be similar, as

well as the kind and strength of the involvement and the motivation are doubtless often decisive of the consequences of identification.

Some directions for future research on identification

Within the field of psychology identification is regarded as a vital factor in the socialization of the individual. We have attempted to determine whether identification is also important in the mass communication process. The Scandinavian research on children offers some indications that it is important in certain cases. Thus, we may reformulate the question whether identification is important to when is it important. With respect to this latter question the existing empirical studies yield only sporadic findings.

Parenthetically, we might point out that the Scandinavian research on adults and identification is even more scarce than that on children and consequently offers few leads. The debate concerning adult identification with respect to mass media partly parallels the debate concerning children, however, but the emphases rather lie on advertising on the one hand, and on information, e.g. news, on the other. The discussion has, for example, concerned the importance of identification with respect to possible harmful effects of certain advertising or more sensational reporting of crime, accidents and disasters. Providing of opportunities for identification as a technique to increase the perceived relevance of information has also been discussed. What effects in terms of feelings and knowledge does, for example, the report of a severe natural catastrophe that describes the economic consequences of the disaster have, compared to a report that tells about an abandoned 4 year-old child wandering about a market-place in the midst of the disaster area? A related question is how psychic and geographic distance to the person, the milieu/situation or the relationship may affect identification and the potential to identify.

One reason why the empirical findings as to when identification is important are so sporadic may be the biased focus of research we outlined earlier. Another reason may lie in the special nature of mass communication relative to personal communication, which may have affected researchers' manner of approaching the identification phenomenon. When one discusses identification in the socialization process one considers a long-term process, stretching over the childhood years, for example, When one discusses identification in the mass communication process, however, the tendency has been to see the process in a limited, short-term perspective, such as in terms of individual film experiences. The interest in specific programs, films, etc., has therefore grown somewhat out of proportion. This fragmentary view characterizes not only Scandinavian research and debate, but the international research and debate as well.

In all probability, however, the answer to the question of when identification is important in the mass communication process is more likely to be found in the comprehensive long-term perspective.

In other words, we should conceive of identification as a cumulative phenomenon in the interplay of mass media and other agents of socialization in society at large.

Another consequence of the short-term perspective is the fact that studies treating the relation of identification to the effects of mass communication have only considered effects on the individual. It should also be of interest to give some thought to the implications of these effects for the groups to which the individual belongs and for society as a whole. Similarly, the studies have treated children's conditions for identification only quite superficially, usually in terms of more or less conventional background variables. In this context greater attention to how such characteristics as motives, norms and values on the part of the child influence his choice of identification object would be of vital interest. For example, what needs -- security? status? power? -- does mass media identification fill for the child with few opportunities to identify with "real" persons in the socialization process, due to poor relations with them? The conditions for identification are to be found not only among the receivers, of course. A study of the format of the mass media messages and the opportunities for identification offered by them, as well as how these messages reflect the norms and values of the communicator would also be a most essential contribution to the research on identification. The models and conceptions of reality that the child possesses are ultimately derived from the models and views of reality the culture offers. And if these do not represent the ideals we actually possess, we must finally ask: For whom is identification really important?

Thus, we feel that future research on identification must free itself of the fragmentarism that has characterized the debate and research up to now, and relate more intimately to psychological, sociological and mass communication theory. Such a course would increase the prospects of achieving a whole view and a common frame of reference with respect to children and identification in the mass communication process.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2) J. Kagan: The Concept of Identification. Psychological Review 65 1958.

3) G. Maletzke: Psychologie der Massenkommunikation. Hamburg 1963.

4) G. Maletzke: Op.cit. 1963.

5) Osgood et al. describe communication in terms of four components: source, signal or message, channel, receiver.
C.E. Osgood, C.J. Suci, P.H. Tannenbaum: The Measurement of Meaning. Urbana 1957.
On the basis of these four components Wright describes the peculiar characteristics of mass communication:
Communicator:
The source, or communicator, tends to be, or to operate within, a complex organization. The organization is characterized by an extensive division of labor and often by considerable costs of production.
Message:
The message consists of a multitude of identical messages and is of a public nature, i.e. it is not addressed to a limited, known audience. Further, the message is often of a transient nature and is often able to reach all the receivers within a relatively short time, or even simultaneously.
Channel or medium:
The message is transmitted by technological means. (It should be stressed, however, that the use of technology is necessary but not sufficient requisite for the medium to be considered a mass medium.)
Receiver:
The audience is relatively large, that is to say, the communicator cannot interact with the audience on a face-to-face basis. Further, the audience is heterogeneous in terms of individual and social variables. It is also anonymous in that it generally remains personally unknown to the communicator, although audience members should not be considered to be socially isolated from one another.
C.R. Wright: Mass Communication. A Sociological Perspective. New York 1959.

6) See, for example, H.T. Himmelweit, A.N. Oppenheim, P. Vince: Television and the Child. London 1958.

O. Linné: Barns reaktioner på våldsinslag i tv (Reactions of Children to Scenes of Violence on TV). Sveriges Radio informerar nr 6. Stockholm 1969.

W. Schramm, J. Lyle, E.B. Parker: Television in the Lives of our Children. Stanford 1961.

7) Weiss, for example, gives the following definition: "Basically, identification refers to a person's involvement in the depicted events through a psychological relationship with one or another of the participants.... As a result, he participates vicariously in the events, feelings and behavior that relate to the object of identification, and experiences the communication more personally and deeply." W. Weiss: Effects of the Mass Media of Communication. In G. Lindzey, E. Aronson (eds.): The Handbook of Social Psychology. Reading 1969.

Similar definitions are given in

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R. Häggbom: Barn och film (Children and Film). Uppsala 1956.

8) L. Furhammar: Filmpåverkan (The Influence of Film). Stockholm 1965.

9) D. Lerner: Towards a Communication Theory of Modernization. In L. Pye (ed.): Communications and Political Development. Princeton 1963.

10) F.E. Emery: Psychological Effects of the Western Film: A study in television viewing. Humar. Relations 12 1959. Cited in D. Lundberg, O. Hultén: Individen och mass media. Stockholm 1968.

11) J. Mitry: Estétique et Psychologie du Cinéma. Paris 1963.

12) P.H. Mussen: Op.cit. 1963.

N. Sanford: The Dynamics of Identification. Psychological Review 62 1965.

13) See, for example, A. Bandura, A.C. Huston: Identification as a Process of Incidental Learning. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 63 1961.

14) L. Berkowitz, E. Rawlings: Effects of Film Violence on Inhibitions against Subsequent Aggression. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 66 1963.

15) U. Bronfenbrenner: Två barndomsvärldar. Barnuppfostran i Sovjetunionen och USA (Two Worlds of Childhood. Bringing Up Children in the Soviet Union and the United States). Stockholm 1972.

16) A. Bandura, D. Ross, S.A. Ross: Imitation of Film-mediated Aggressive Models. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 66 1969.

17) See, for example, E.E. Maccoby, W.C. Wilson: Identification and Observational Learning from Films. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 55 1957.

18) G. Maletzke: Op.cit. 1963.

19) C. v Feilitzen: Om etermediernas funktioner (On the Functions of the Broadcast Media). In Radio och tv möter publiken. En bok från Publik- och Programforskningsavdelningen. Stockholm 1972.

C. v Feilitzen: Etermediernas funktioner (Functions of the Broadcast Media). SR/PUB nr 127/71. (In progress).

20) C. v Feilitzen, O. Linné: Barn, ungdom och etermedia. En kartläggning av 8-16 åringars mediakonsumtion och en intensivstudie av popmusikens och tvns funktioner (Children, Young People and the Broadcast Media. A survey of 8-16 year-olds' media consumption and an intensive study of the functions of pop-music and television). SR/PUB nr 13/66, 6/69, 53/68. Stockholm 1969. (Stencil)

21) I. Olsson, G. Preisler: Intensivundersökning av fyra radioprogram för barn (An Intensive Study of Four Radio Programs for Children). SR/PUB nr 160/69. Stockholm 1969. (Stencil)

22) J.D. Halloran, E. Eyre-Brook: Børnenes TV-avis (Children's TV-magazine). Danmarks Radio. Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester. København 1970. (Stencil)

This result was further elaborated upon in a discussion of Finnish news programs for children. See B. Boucht: Nyheter för barn -- synpunkter på deras målsättning och förverkligande (News for Children -- comments concerning goals and program production). Oy. Yleisradio Ab/LSP. BU-programgruppmötet i Reykjavik 1971. (Stencil)

23) C. v Feilitzen, O. Linné: 3-6 åringars levnadsvanor och etermediabeteende (Living Habits and Broadcast Media Behavior of 3-6 year-olds). SR/PUB nr 7/68. Stockholm 1969. (Stencil)

24) Identification has also caused children to experience fear while viewing children's programs in which children have appeared. This has occurred, for example, when the children in the programs have been confronted with something unpleasant or dangerous. See, for example:

Å.W. Edfeldt, S. Johansson: "Livsfarlig ledning". Förprövning av en informationsfilm från SJ ("Danger, high voltage". Pretest of an informative film from the Swedish Railway Corporation). SR/PUB nr 8/67. Stockholm 1967. (Stencil)

L. Filipson, I. Schyller, B. Höijer: Förprövning av programmet "Varför måste vi dö?" (Pretest of the Program "Why must we die?"). SR/PUB nr 198/71. Stockholm 1972. (Stencil)

See also page 20.

25) B. Sundqvist: Ljudradions barnprogramvecka (One Week of Children's Radio). SR/PUB nr 160/69. Stockholm 1970. (Stencil)

26) UTB Research Group/H. Bonnevier: Förprövning av ett provprogram i lågstadieserien KLOTET (Pretest of a Pilot Program in the Elementary School Series THE SPHERE). SR/PUB nr 187/72. Stockholm 1973. (Stencil)

27) L. Filipson, I. Schyller: Undersökning av två barnprogram i serien "Nu ska vi titta på..." (Study of Two Children's Programs in the Series "Let's take a look at..."). SR/PUB nr 101/69. Stockholm 1970. (Stencil)

28) G. Preisler: 5-6 åringars reaktioner på TRU:s förskoleprogram (The Reactions of 5-6 year-olds to TRU's Pre-school Programs). SR/PUB nr 238/70. Stockholm 1970. (Stencil)

29) M. Starck, I. Schyller: 4-6 åriga barns preferenser för olika typer av medverkande i småbarnsprogram (4-6 year-olds' Preferences for Various Characters in Pre-school Programming). SR/PUB nr 57/67. Stockholm 1967. (Stencil)

30) T. Ørjasaeter: Med barn i teater. Et forsøk på å belyse hvordan barn i første klasse reagerar på en teaterforestilling (With Children in the Theater. An effort to describe first-grade children's reactions to a theater drama). Oslo 1959. (Stencil) Cited in G. Klingberg: Barnlitteraturforskning. En introduktion. Stockholm 1972.

31) Sex-identification has also been found in, for example

K.J. Hansen: Barn og tegneserielesning (Children and Comic-strip Reading). 1958.

V. Höjer: En explorativ studie av ungdomens filmupplevelse (An Explorative Study of Young People's Film Experiences). Stockholm 1966. (Stencil)

I. Klintemar, G. Preisler: Förprövning av provprogrammet i serien "Sermanpå" (Pretest of the Pilot Program in the Series "Sermanpå"). SR/PUB nr 137/69. Stockholm 1969. (Stencil)

M. Starck: Förprövning av två program ur serien "Malte och Malin" (Pretest of Two Programs in the Series "Malte and Malin"). SR/PUB nr 44/67. Stockholm 1967. (Stencil)

32) See, for example, L.A. Handel: Hollywood Looks at its Audience. Urbana 1950. Cited in W. Weiss: Op.cit. 1969.

E.E. Maccoby, W.C. Wilson, R.V. Burton: Differential Movie-viewing Behavior of Male and Female Viewers. Journal of Personality 26 1958.

33) L. Filipson, A-M. Wachtmeister: 4 VIP. Delrapport II. Invandrarbarns och svenska barns inställning till serien ("4 VIP". Report no. 2. The Attitudes of Swedish and Immigrant Children to the Series). SR/PUB nr 169/71:II. Stockholm 1972. (Stencil)

34) O. Sennton: Biovanor och filmpreferenser hos barn i tioårsåldern (Movie Habits and Film Preferences among 10 year-olds). Stockholm 1958. (Stencil)

35) Results in the international literature, too, indicate that similarity of sex and ethnic background increases the likelihood of identification. See, for example,

E.E. Maccoby, E.C. Wilson: Op.cit. 1957.

M.A. Rosekrans: Imitation in Children as a Function of Perceived Similarity to a Social Model and Vicarious Reinforcement. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 7 1967.

C. Clark: Race, Identification, and Television Violence. In Television and Social Behavior. Vol. 5. Washington D.C. U. S. Government Printing Office 1972.

B.S. Greenberg: Television for Children: Dimensions of Communicator and Audience Perceptions. Audio-Visual Communication Review 13 1965.

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37) M. Almers: Barns identifikation vid tv-program (Children's Identification with TV-programs). SR/PUB nr 94/70. Stockholm 1971. (Stencil)

38) L. Furhammar: Op.cit. 1965.

39) Arnheim also found that American housewives choose three types of identification objects in daytime serials: the weak, the good and the evil character. R. Arnheim: The World of the Daytime Serial. In P.F. Lazarsfeld, F. Stanton (eds): Radio Research 1942-43. New York 1944.

40) E.E. Maccoby, W.C. Wilson: Op.cit. 1957.

41) M. Almers: Op.cit. 1971.

42) R. Vilpas: Kartoittava tutkimus 10-11 vuotiaiden lasten identifikaatiosta televisioesiintyjiin (Exploratory Study of 10-11 year-olds' Identification with Television Characters). Turku Finnish University 1972. (Stencil)

43) Emery's study of 40 10-13 year-old boys' viewing of a Western film, however, provides some information concerning the relations of other characteristics in children to wishful identification. Most of the boys identified with the boy-hero in the film, who was exposed to various threats and wh had difficulty defending himself. Some of the boys, however, identified instead with the more traditional adult hero, who was able to manage any situation. These boys were found to be in a state of psychic imbalance, tended to lay the blame for problems on others than themselves, and had difficulty in fitting into groups. The author reasoned that these latter boys were given a vicarious experience of balance by the act of identification. F.E. Emery: Op.cit. 1959.

44) B. Johansson: Några aspekter på barns reaktioner inför en för dem avsedd typ av televisionsprogram (Some Aspects of Children's Reactions to a Television Program Intended for a Child Audience). Stockholm 1961. (Stencil)

45) Bandura found that imitation occurs as frequently following animated films as following films with real-life human characters. A. Bandura: Social-Learning Theory of Identificatory Processes. In D.A. Goslin (ed.): Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research. Chicago 1969.

46) J.H. Flavell: The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget. Princeton 1963.

47) L. Furhammar: Op.cit. 1965.

48) C. v Feilitzen: Op.cit. 1972.

49) D. Howitt, G. Cumberbatch: The Parameters of Attraction to Mass Media Figures. Journal of Moral Education 3 1973.

50) O. Linné: Barn och etermedia (Children and the Broadcast Media). SR/PUB nr 6/64. Stockholm 1965. (Stencil)

51) See, for example, C. Bloch: Nogle effekter af en tv-børneudsendelse hos førskolebørn (Some Effects of a Televised Children's Program on Pre-school Children). København 1972. (Stencil)

52) S. Ahnsjö: Svenska psykiaters syn på filmpåverkan. Resultat av enkätsvar (The Views of Swedish Psychiatrists on Film Influence). Svenska Filminstitutet. Stockholm 1965.

53) M. Almers: Op.cit. 1971.

54) UTB Research Group/H. Bonnevier: Op.cit. 1973.

55) Attitudes may also be classified under the other headings, since many researchers ascribe partly cognitive, partly affective and partly active components to attitudes.

56) H. Brolin: Barnpublikens storlek och reaktioner under radio- och tv-veckan 8/3-14/3 1964. Radions och tvns roll som miljöfaktorer bland 3-9 åringar. (The Size and Reactions of the Child Audience during the Radio and Television Week, 8-14/3 1964. The role of radio and television as milieu factors among 3-9 year-olds). SR/PUB nr 3/64. Stockholm 1964. (Stencil)

H. Brolin: Barns mottagning av programstoff i radio och tv. Ett försök till beskrivning av motivationsmekanismer grundad på SR:s barnenkät. (Children's Reception of Radio and Television Program Content. An attempt to describe motivation mechanisms on the basis of SR:s survey of children). SR/PUB nr 3/64. Stockholm 1964. (Stencil)

57) S. Minkkinen: Experiments on Comprehension and Impact of Movies among Children and Young People. Oy. Yleisradio Ab/ LSP. Helsinki 1969. (Stencil)

58) H. Brolin: Op.cit. 1964.

59) O. Linné: Op.cit. 1965.

60) Tannenbaum and Gaer have also shown that identification may, generally speaking, influence the viewer's emotional state following a mass-mediated message: When the leading character in a film was in danger, viewers who perceived greater similarities between themselves and this character experienced greater stress than those who perceived less similarity. P.H. Tannenbaum, E.P. Gaer: Mood Change as a Function of Stress of Protagonist and Degree of Identification in a Film-viewing Situation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 2 1965.

61) R. Vilpas: Op.cit. 1972.

62) L. Furhammar: Op.cit. 1965.

63) M. Almers: Op.cit. 1971.

64) E.E. Maccoby, W.C. Wilson: Op.cit. 1957.

65) Studies having considered more than one area are

M. Almers: Op.cit. 1971.

L. Filipson, A-M. Wachtmeister: Op.cit. 1972.

V. Höjer: Op.cit. 1966.

I. Klintemar, G. Preisler: Op.cit. 1969.

R. Vilpas: Op.cit. 1972.

The first two studies employ a similar index of identification as the one used in E.E. Maccoby, W.C. Wilson: Op.cit. 1957.